



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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January 8, 2003

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members
FROM: Carl Osaki, WSBOH Member
RE: UPDATE ON GROUP B WATER SYSTEM SURVEY

Summary and Background

The State Board of Health (SBOH) has statutory authority under RCW 43.20.050 to adopt rules to protect public water supplies. Group B water systems generally serve two to 14 connections, while Group A water systems generally serve 15 or more connections. There are approximately 12,500 Group B systems serving 2 percent of Washington's population. Group A systems serve approximately 82 percent and private wells serve about 10% of Washington residents.

Reports of waterborne disease outbreaks (two or more related cases of illness) in Washington are rare. The number of individual cases is not known, and difficult to estimate. It is difficult to identify illness due to contaminated water, as the pathogens that cause most waterborne illnesses can also be transmitted through contaminated food or from poor hygienic practices (The Health of Washington State, p. 292).

The Department of Health (DOH) received state general funds for the 2001-2003 biennium to partner with local health jurisdictions to develop better information regarding Group B water systems, with the goal of protecting the health of people on these smaller systems. Gregg Grunenfelder (DOH), Keith Higman (Island County Health Department) and Ed Dzedzy (Lincoln County Health Department) will report on the activities and findings of the Group B water systems survey. One of their goals in presenting this information to the Board today is to highlight that these activities are an important public health function.

Board action recommended

No action recommended at this time.